

## A New Legless Alpine Mustelid: *Mustela slupsis* sp. nov. (“Schlups”)

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### Abstract

We here describe *Mustela slupsis* sp. nov., a newly documented mustelid species native to the European Alps. Known locally as the “Schlups,” this highly specialized mammal diverges significantly from typical mustelid morphology and life strategies. It is entirely limbless and tailless, propelling itself through rolling locomotion adapted to mountainous terrain. The Schlups can reach up to 150 cm in length and 60 cm in circumference depending on its nutritional condition. Predatory and solitary in nature, it emits powerful pheromones that both pacify predators and attract prey, including small mammals and occasionally humans. Remarkably, *M. slupsis* reproduces asexually through dorsal budding, and exhibits a life cycle spanning from alpine peaks to the ocean floor, synchronized with tectonic processes. Its existence challenges fundamental assumptions about mammalian biology, movement, and reproduction.

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### Introduction

The European Alps have long served as a natural fortress for biodiversity, harboring elusive species shaped by extreme elevation, seasonal variability, and geographic isolation. While alpine fauna has been extensively cataloged, some accounts have been relegated to folklore—until now. Among these was the elusive “Schlups,” a creature often dismissed as a shepherd's invention, said to roll down mountains and emit a scent that lures both animals and humans.

It wasn't until 2013, during a long-term alpine megafauna survey funded by the Weasels Foundation, that concrete evidence of such a species was documented. Genetic analysis, behavioral observation, and anatomical study confirmed what had once seemed impossible: the Schlups is real, and scientifically describable as *Mustela slupsis* sp. nov., a highly adapted offshoot of the Mustelidae family.

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### Morphology and Locomotion

At first glance, *M. slupsis* resembles a weasel that has been compressed into a tube. It lacks all external limbs and a tail, featuring instead a seamless, cylindrical body cloaked in short, velvet-like fur. Coloration varies from earthy brown to mottled gray, aiding in camouflage among alpine rocks and scree fields.

Adults typically measure 80–150 cm in length and up to 60 cm in circumference, with body size determined largely by access to prey. Its internal musculature is specialized for torsional movement, allowing the creature to twist and roll with surprising agility.

Movement is executed by a combination of gravity-assisted rolling and muscle-driven undulations. From its high-altitude birthplace, *M. slupsis* begins life by rolling downhill, steering with subtle shifts in internal musculature. While unable to ascend, it navigates horizontal or

descending slopes with remarkable control. It can remain motionless for weeks, coiled in crevices, waiting for prey to approach.

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## Feeding Behavior

*M. slupsis* is a carnivore with highly opportunistic feeding habits. It emits a complex mixture of airborne pheromones, detectable within a 10–15 meter radius, that serves dual purposes: it soothes potential predators into passive disregard and simultaneously entices prey. Field researchers report feeling uncharacteristically tranquil when approaching the animal, a phenomenon attributed to these chemical emissions.

Once prey is within striking range, the Schlups lunges with startling precision, dislocating its jaw laterally and vertically—similar to serpentine feeding mechanisms. The oral cavity can distend to accommodate prey much larger than its resting head diameter. One adult specimen was documented consuming a full-grown marmot in under six minutes. While rare, unconfirmed local reports suggest that human fatalities have occurred, particularly involving disoriented hikers during foggy conditions.

Digestion is slow and energetically efficient. The Schlups may not feed again for weeks after a large meal, relying on stored fat and muscle catabolism during dormant periods.

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## Reproduction and Life Cycle

Unlike any known member of the Mustelidae family, *M. slupsis* reproduces asexually. In ideal health and with sufficient caloric intake, a secondary cranial structure begins to form along the dorsal midline of the adult's back. This structure develops into a fully independent head over several months, complete with functional sensory organs and a rudimentary digestive tract. Eventually, the new Schlups detaches from the parent, a process both traumatic and final, after which the two individuals part ways.

More astonishing is the species' geological life cycle. After decades (or even centuries) of alpine descent, an adult Schlups will reach sea level. At this stage, it undergoes physiological changes associated with poikilothermy, allowing it to adapt to variable temperatures in marine environments. The Schlups continues its journey into the ocean, where it seeks great depth and eventually lays a clutch of 1–3 eggs on the ocean floor.

These eggs possess extraordinarily durable shells capable of withstanding pressures exceeding 500 atmospheres. They remain dormant for centuries, if necessary, until tectonic uplift transforms the seabed into a new mountain. Once the egg reaches sufficient elevation and the air becomes thin enough to signal a high-altitude environment, the hatchling Schlups cracks its shell and begins the cycle anew by rolling downhill.

This epic, Earth-scale lifecycle makes *M. slupsis* unique not only among mammals but in the entire animal kingdom.

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## Discussion

The discovery of *Mustela slupsis* raises fundamental questions about adaptation, evolutionary isolation, and the role of geological time in shaping biology. Its complete departure from

ambulatory locomotion, serpentine feeding mechanics, and parthenogenetic reproduction challenge existing frameworks for mammalian classification.

Its lifecycle, synchronized with plate tectonics and orogeny, suggests a deeply time-embedded strategy that may help explain why the species has remained undocumented until now. Additionally, the behavioral effects of its pheromonal emissions on humans merit serious neurochemical study, with possible implications for both animal behavior and psychopharmacology.

Though previously relegated to alpine legend, the Schlups is not only real—it is one of the most extraordinary organisms ever documented in the Alpine ecosystem.

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